

Above the Sand Heads; Firsthand Accounts of Pioneering in the Area Which, in 1879, Became the Municipality of British Columbia, narrated by T. Ellis Ladner and prepared for publication by Edna G. Ladner. Burnaby: the author, 1979. Pp. 181, illus., \$6.95.

Above the Sand Heads, the reminiscences of T. Ellis Ladner (1871-1958), is refreshingly different from other publications dealing with pioneer memories. Pride in the family's role in the development of British Columbia and attention to the fine details of everyday social and economic life in an early Fraser River community make this book a valuable work for those studying the late nineteenth-century history of the province.

The book describes the life and labour of pioneer Fraser River settlers in the Delta area from the 1860s to 1900. Edna Ladner, who collected and edited these reminiscences, describes the emigration patterns of her father and other members of the family. They, like many other English, often came to British Columbia from other parts of North America and, after trying their luck in the 1858 gold rush, stayed to take up their traditional trades — farming, in the Ladners' case.

It is difficult to judge the academic merit of this book as it has no footnotes and very few of the specific dates cited can be verified. The inclusion of a good map of the Delta area would have been a great help for the reader as well. On the positive side it provides a rare first-hand account of the extent of pioneer fishing and farming technology in the lower Fraser region. Details about the economic advantage of unfouling a ship's bottom in the lower, intertidal part of the Fraser, using a potato to judge the salinity for salting salmon, sources of fishing supplies, and overall descriptions of early canning and farming procedures and the social life of the workforce indicate that Ladner was very closely related to and knowledgeable about these topics.

For students of social history this work provides much information on British Columbia's early native and oriental labour force. Bunkhouse life, the role of the barroom, the methods of hiring, and social conditions such as housing, food and entertainment are described and accompanied by Ladner's personal observations about the various non-European members of the community he lived in. The description of the social and economic conditions of the early Delta white settler is also well developed. In addition to the early farming and fishing techniques Ladner's account of the transportation system of the era shows that before and in part after the arrival of the CPR the Fraser River community depended on the traditional maritime transport on which its economy and trade patterns were

originally established. T. E. Ladner himself was part of this early community and looked upon "those who arived on the cushioned seats of railroad trains" with some disdain.

Above the Sand Heads is much better than most of British Columbia's local histories. Edna G. Ladner has done an excellent job in presenting her father's memoirs and deserves far more credit than she allows herself. The result is a local history which is essential reading for serious students of British Columbia's late nineteenth-century history and a thoroughly enjoyable work for the general reader.

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Exile in the Wilderness: The Life of Chief Factor Archibald McDonald, 1790-1853, by Jean Murray Cole. Don Mills: Burns and MacEachern Ltd., 1979. Pp. xviii, 268, \$15.95.

Jean Murray Cole's biography of her noteworthy ancestor, Chief Factor Archibald McDonald, is widely and exhaustively researched. It follows his career from his birth as the thirteenth and youngest child of a Highland Scot tacksman in Glencoe who, although an episcopalian, had fought as a youth with the Jacobites at Culloden in 1745, through McDonald's enlistment as "clerk and agent" in the Earl of Selkirk's service in 1811 at the age of twenty-one years, through his acceptance of a clerkship in the Hudson's Bay Company's service in the spring of 1820, to his retirement as Chief Factor at Fort Colvile on the Columbia River in 1844. McDonald settled at St. Andrews on the Ottawa River, sufficiently close to Montreal to enjoy the company of colleagues who had settled in the environs of the former metropolis of the fur trade. He lived the life of a gentleman farmer until his death in 1853. The author provides a short postscript, giving brief sketches of the lives of his children.

The experience of reading the biography can be likened to a new perception of an old and familiar painting. As the events of the Selkirk period and the later fur trade pass in review the author's focus on McDonald does not give rise to new and different interpretations. Rather, in allowing as much as possible the words of McDonald and his contemporaries to cast events and detail circumstances, Cole conveys a sense of previously unnoticed subtleties of texture and hue, eliciting insights that enlarge the understanding and appreciation of what had been considered as defined and complete. The movement of a party of settlers under McDonald's direction in the winter of 1813 from Churchill to York emerges as a noteworthy human accomplishment. The enervating effect of the Nor'Wester threat on the colonists in Red River is expressed nowhere else as graphic-